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AUTHOR Mahan, Bernice Marie; Ware, Brenda Joyce
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ABSTRACT

Purposes of this master's research project were to (1) determine the reasons for which parents educate their children at home, and (2) compare the attitudes of home-schooling parents and public school superintendents about the benefits of home schooling. Subjects were parents who home-schooled their children and public school superintendents in a five county area in midwestern and southwestern Ohio. Data were collected using a checklist which presented 10 reasons for schooling children at home and an attitude survey which included 20 statements about the benefits of home schooling. Items in both instruments were derived from a review of the related literature. Findings indicate that (1) the literature on home schooling is accurate in so far as it portrays beliefs about schools and education; (2) home-schooling parents agreed with all but one of the benefits of home-schooling reported in the literature while superintendents disagreed with the literature on all but two points regarding the possible benefits of home schooling; and (3) participating parents and public school superintendents had conflicting attitudes, with superintendents exhibiting animosity toward home schooling in unsolicited, negative, written comments appended to the survey. (RH)

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HOME-SCHOOLING: REASONS SOME PARENTS CHOOSE THIS ALTERNATIVE FORM OF EDUCATION, AND A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF HOME-SCHOOLING PARENTS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS TOWARD THE BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOLING

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MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

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Brenda Joyce Ware

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Dayton, Ohio

July, 1987

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Review of the Literature

Introduction to Home-schooling

Home-schooling, as defined by Whitehead and Bird (1984), is an educational alternative in which there is individualized instruction of the child (or children) by the parent in basic living skills as well as in courses of academic study. Divoky (1984, p. 395) indicates this alternative form of education "is quickly becoming a National movement (in America) with its own gurus, publications, and support networks." Estimates of the number of children being home-schooled range from 50,000 (Mulcrone, 1983) to 260,000 (Lines, 1987), and some experts think there may be as many as one million children being taught at home (Naisbitt, 1982).

The idea of home-schooling, however, is not new. Home education has its roots deep in American history (Whitehead and Bird, 1984). During colonial America, the decision whether or not to educate, as well as the method and curriculum were left solely to the parent (Tobak and Zirkel, 1982). Although private education was available (most often through the church), home-schooling was the major form of education; and, it was very successful. "It is striking," according to historical revisionist Samuel L. Blumenfeld (1981, p. 15), "that literacy was much higher in pre-1835 American society — that is, before the advent of public education in this country." Whitehead and

Bird (1984, p. 23) state, "Many of America's most illustrious leaders were educated wholly or substantially through home education." They include George Washington, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Daniel Webster, and Benjamin Franklin. In more recent years, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gen. George Patten, Douglas MacArthur, Agatha Christie, and Pearl S. Buck were among those who were home-schooled (Whitehead and Bird, 1984).

Various researchers agree — indeed the home is the first and the finest educational nest (Moore, 1984; Holt, 1983; Bloom, 1980). Holt (1983, p. 393) states:

> The most attentive, perceptive, and thoughtful classroom teachers could never elicit from their students the amount and intensity of feedback that home-schooling parents typically get from their children — because parents know and understand their children so much better.

Reasons for Home-Schooling

The reasons today's parents choose home-schooling as an educational alternative for their children are numerous and varied. However, Lines (1987, p. 510) indicates that home-schoolers share at least one common belief: "...that parents can and should be deeply involved in the education and development of their own children." A search of the literature reveals four other major reasons for home-schooling: dissatisfaction with traditional schools, the desire to maintain control of the family unit, religious reasons, and child development.

Many parents cite an increasing dissatisfaction with traditional schools as the primary reason for home-schooling their children (Moore and Moore, 1982). This dissatisfaction often concerns the curriculum taught in public schools. According to Lines (1987, p. 510): "Some parents object to the political or cultural values they find in public and private schools." Other parents question the moral and educational quality of textbooks (Choyke, 1986; Williams and others, 1984; Moore and Moore, 1982). The negative effects of peer pressure (Ball, 1984; Moore and Moore, 1981 & 1982) and an emphasis on competition in the public achools (Wade and others, 1984; Moore and Moore, 1982) are also factors influencing parents to home-school their children. In addition, some parents feel traditional schools are unable to provide adequate individualization for their children (Wade and others, 1984; Lines, 1987; Williams and others, 1984).

The desire to maintain control of the family unit is another reason parents choose to home-school their children (Moore and Moore, 1981; Wade and others, 1984). Moore (1981, p. 26) states: "The family is still the social base, and must be, if our society is to survive." Home-schooling parents want their children to be family-socialized and desire their lives and the lives of their children to be home-centered rather than revolving around school schedules and activities (Williams and others, 1984). They prefer their children to learn socialization skills from parent models in the home instead of from peer models in the school (Moore and Moore,

1981 & 1982; Wade and others, 1984; Williams and others, 1984).

A large number of parents home-school their children for religious reasons. Lines (1987, p. 510) claims: "Today, however, the largest growth in home-schooling appears to be among devout Christian parents who are unhappy with the secular nature of the public schools and have not found a suitable religious school." Divoky (1983) also reports the probability that a majority of home-schoolers are religious fundamentalists who are unhappy with the failure of the public schools to teach religious and spiritual tenents.

Uphoff and Gilmore (1935, p. 86) stated: "When children enter school before they are developmentally ready to cope with it, their chances for failing increase dramatically." Moore and Moore (1982) gathered reports from a number of parents who chose to home-school their children in the early years because they felt their children were not ready for formal instruction in traditional schools. This issue of child development was another reason often cited by home-schoolers for keeping their children at home.

In addition to the four major categories of reasons for home-schooling, there are several minor reasons which one finds less frequently. Lines (1987, p. 510) claims: "Many parents wish to spend extended time with their young children before enrolling them in school." Divoky (1983) and Holt (1983) suggest that home-schooling is a natural extension of the life styles of some families. Still other parents believe that educating their children at home is their constitutional

right (Ball, 1984; Whitehead and Bird, 1984; Moore, 1982).

While the reasons for home-schooling are many and diverse, there are several benefits to be derived from this educational alternative of home-schooling.

Benefits of Home-Schooling

Studies have shown a number of benefits associated with home-schooling. These benefits have been noted in the areas of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. In addition, home-schooling has provided parents with an opportunity to educate their children according to their personal convictions.

Physical development. The first area in which home-schooling is considered a benefit is that of the physical development of the child. Studies by Nagera (1972), Yakovlev (1972), and Piaget (1962) indicate that the young child's brain should not be hurried in the learning process. As the brain grows in structure, it becomes more adequate in function (Moore, 1982). The brain must be given time and the best possible climate in order to develop properly. That climate, as Moore (1982) notes, is a good home with reasonable freedom and solitude.

In addition to the brain in general, the eyes need time to develop and mature properly. Physicians and ophthalmologists agree that young children in traditional schools use their eyes excessively for close work, whether it be in looking at pictures, making drawings, or looking at a nearby chalk-

board. Such eye strain leads to an increase in myopia (Newton, 1972; Hilgartner, 1962; Gesell and Ilg, 1946). In his study, Coleman (1968) shows that approximately half of the students he tested had visual, perceptual, or refractive problems that were severe enough to cause reading difficulties. According to Cole (1968, p. 72), those children who cannot adjust to the difficulties associated with close vision often "find reading so uncomfortable that they give up trying to learn."

Closely related to visual skills are auditory skills, especially for reading and arithmetic achievement. Some scientists have found that hearing, like vision, may not mature enough to accomplish these tasks until the child is eight or nine years old (Rosner, 1973; Wepman, 1968).

Maturity of vision and hearing alone, however, are not adequate for early educational success but rather require the integration of all the senses. This complex integration, called intersensory perception, also reaches the maturity level at about eight years of age (Birch and Lefford, 1963). Children who are forced too early into tasks in which the senses must work evenly or in balance may appear brain-damaged or handicapped (Moore, 1982). In fact, Ayers (1968, p. 75) states that many learning disorders may indeed result from a "lack of integration of the senses and the balanced development of the brain." Such integration extends as well to muscle coordination (McCabe, 1982). Traditional schools, however, begin a child's formal education by age five or six —

before the child's brain and senses mature (Moore, 1982).

Cognitive development. Just as the physical development of a young child cannot be hurried, so too the cognitive development. Many researchers, including Piaget (1969), Rohwer (1973), and Moore (1982) note that a child is unable to reason abstractly until seven to eleven years of age. Such reasoning is necessary to thoughtful reading. Some experts contend when the child is forced to read at an earlier age, as is the case in traditional schools, reading often becomes a rote exercise marked by boredom and frustration rather than a true process of thinking (Moore, 1982). Rohwer (1973, p. 360) agrees, adding that both "reading and arithmetic require conceptual abilities that many youngsters do not achieve with ease until they are close to nine years."

In the home-school, experts claim such activities can be put off until the child is ready. The unhurried environment prevents the child from experiencing what Elkind (1972) terms "intellectual burning", resulting from unnecessary pressures on the child during physical and cognitive development.

Many researchers also indicate that a simple environment (as found in the home) with few distractions and involving few people is needed by children for optimum learning to occur. Bronfenbrenner (1970, p. 359) notes that "the more people there are around the child, the fewer opportunities he has for meaningful human contact."

Home education utilizes the tutorial method of instruction which many studies have shown to be superior to traditional

classroom instruction (Whitehead and Bird, 1984). Such instruction encourages students to be self-directed and more independent as they pursue academic objectives and projects. In a traditional classroom, students find it easy to drift along with the crowd; but studying alone, the student quickly learns that "progress is a direct result of effort" (Wade and others, 1984, p. 20). The one-on-one relationship found in the home-school provides more of an opportunity for self-directed learning.

Ray (1986-87), in reviewing home-schooling research, notes that there are significantly more cognitive demands placed on children taught at home than on those taught in traditional schools. Those educated at home ask more questions, thus increasing the learning process. This may be due to the fact that teachers in traditional schools tend to ask more questions than mothers, thus children learn quickly that their role is to answer, not ask, questions. Research, notes Ray (1986-87, p. 24), also indicates that "children frequently used more complex language at home than at schools."

Finally, a number of studies attest to the educational effectiveness of home instruction. Bowen (1987) reports that in a random sampling survey of Home School Legal Defense Association Members throughout the United States, 90.87% of the home-schooled children were at or above grade level in reading and 79.25% were at or above grade level in math. Ray (1986-87) reports that home-schooled students in western Australia scored above average on the California Achievement Tests (CAT). Dr.

Raymond S. Moore (1982, p. 372), one of the leading academic authorities on home education and President of The Hewitt Research Foundation, notes:

> Rural and urban children from New York to California and Hawaii and from Alaska and North Dakota to Nebraska and Louisiana have often been performing in the seventy-fifth to ninety-ninth percentiles on Stanford and Iowa Achievement tests. Frequently they are taught by high school-educated parents no more than an hour or two a day, usually utilizing readily available home-school or correspondence curriculum.

Other studies concur with these findings (Lines, 1987; Wade and others, 1986; Holt, 1983).

Emotional Development. Closely tied to physical and cognitive development is the emotional development of a child. Some experts believe the child's relationship to his parents —more to his mother — is vitally important in securing a child's emotional well-being. A number of research psychologists and psychiatrists agree that dangers may arise where there is a lack of close mothering until the child is eight years of age or older (Bowlby, 1973; Berger, 1971; Spitz, 1965). John Bowlby (1973, p. 364), head of World Health Organization Early Childhood Education, notes that numerous studies "make it plain that when deprived of maternal care, the child's development is almost always retarded — physically, intellectually, and socially — and the symptoms of physical and mental illness may appear...and that some children are gravely dangered for life." Other researchers point out that even the best, most personalized day-care centers or kindergartens cannot compensate for the rejection a young child senses when

taken out of the home environment for care by others (Engel, 1981).

Many experts believe that in addition to providing a sense of security, the parents play a crucial role in establishing a sense of self-worth in a child, as well as building a sound value structure. According to Dobson (1983, p. 11), "the epidemic of inferiority and inadequacy seen during the teen years is rooted in the ridicule, rejection, and social competition experienced by vulnerable young children. They are simply not ready to handle the threats to the self-concept that are common in any elementary school setting." The experts contend that rivalry makes children mistrustful, suspicious, and destructive; they do not know how to relate to opponents who are supposed to be their friends. Such competition puts undue emotional stress on young children and has a negative effect on their values (Moore and Moore, 1981). Dobson (1983, p. 11) states that children "need the security and love of parental protection and guidance until their self-concepts are more stabilized and established."

As a child's self-concept and values develop, so does his/her independence (Wade and others, 1984; Moore, 1982; Moore and Moore, 1982). In the home, the child can make his own decisions, work out his own problems, and go at his own pace, under his parent's personal guidance without the negative effects of competition and rivalry (Moore and Moore, 1981). Weininger (1974) found through his studies that children who remain at home longer are more likely to demonstrate

emotional well-being. Taylor (1986), in a study which examined the affective component of learning, found that home-schooled children scored "significantly higher" than children in traditional schools.

Social development. One of the major questions surrounding home-schooling today is the issue of socialization. According to researchers Raymond and Dorothy Moore (1981, p. 38), "A common myth, believed by most of our adult population, indeed suggests...that children are best socialized by mixing them regularly into groups of children about their own age." They note, however, that sending children unnecessarily to out-of-home care during the first eight years or so before habits, manners, and values are well established will generally dilute and prevent efforts toward building a positive (altruistic and principled) sociability. "This, in turn," state Raymond and Dorothy Moore (1981, p. 39), "will make children less secure, more peer dependent, and more prone to anxiety, frustration, and learning failure."

Bronfenbrenner (1970, p. 366), among others, notes that children up to at least the sixth grade who spend more time with peers than with parents become dependent on those peers; and this, in turn, brings about a "pervasive pessimism about themselves, their future, their parents, and even their peers." Among these children, there is a loss of self-direction and self-worth as well as a dependency that encourages learning failure and delinquency. Bronfenbrenner (1970) refers to this peer climate as "social contagion" — the doubtful habits,

manners, and morals; ridicule; rivalry; and so forth which children develop by imitating the attitudes and activities of their peers. Bandura (1963, 1961) concurs, noting that this rivalry has in recent years moved down to preschool levels.

Moore and Moore (1982) contend that positive sociability is firmly linked with the family, as well as with the quantity and quality of self-worth which is dependent on the values and experiences provided by the family. Bereiter (1972) notes the explicit teaching of these values and appropriate modes of conduct more fully or rightfully takes place in the context of the family, not in the traditional schools or by peers. When the child comprehends his social identity within the family unit, he/she is able to function effectively in a peer group (Moore and others, 1979).

It could be that negative (me-first) sociability results from too much peer group association and too few meaningful parental contacts and responsibility experiences in the home during the first eight to twelve years. This early peer influence may bring an indifference to family values and a defiance of parental correction. According to Moore and Moore (1982, p. 17), the child has "few sound values to pass on to the next generation," and is "seldom truly practical, productive, self-directed, or patriotic."

As a result, it could be that a child's sociability is closely tied to his/her emotional development. As Moore (1979, p. 49-50) notes, "When a child has achieved a positive sense of

self-worth, he will adapt more constructively to the world outside his home... and if he has strong internalized values and standards, he will be less vulnerable to peer pressures."

Some experts believe children who receive their early formal education in the home benefit immensely both emotionally and socially. Some studies have consistently shown that children who spend their early years at home tend to be superior in achievement, behavior, sociability, and leadership when compared to children in traditional schools (Moore and others, 1979).

As a child continues to develop, there may come a time when all areas of development — physical, cognitive, emotional, and social — become reasonably enough mature that the child can learn well without serious mental or physical strain. Moore and Moore (1975, p. 34) refer to this point as the Integrated Maturity Level (IML): "the point at which the developmental variables within a child reach an optimum peak of readiness in maturation and cooperative functioning for out-of-home group learning (typical school) experiences." They think this level, however, is not usually reached before the age of eight. Thus, the first eight years of a child's life are crucial. Moore and Moore (1975) feel that the child should remain at home, taught by his/her parents, for at least this amount of time.

Personal convictions. One final area viewed as a benefit of home-schooling is that parents can teach their children according to their own personal convictions. Most of the parents

who are teaching their children at home today have deep religious convictions and desire to preserve their Judeo-Christian heritage (Lines, 1987; Wade and others, 1984; Divoky, 1983). The infiltration of humanism in the public schools is totally unacceptable to them (Rodman, 1983). At home, parents can also educate their children according to their moral, cultural, or political values, any of which may differ from those espoused in the traditional school (Wade and others, 1984; Moore, 1981; Lines, 1987; Divoky, 1983; Mulcrone, 1983). These values range from liberal to conservative, yet in each case the parents can choose the type of education which is best for their child based on their personal beliefs.

Apprehension and Animosity Surrounding Home-schooling

Although numerous benefits have been cited in the literature concerning the issue of home-schooling, public school officials often view this form of education with apprehension and animosity. Once the major form of education in early America, home-based instruction is now considered by many educators as "not quite legitimate" (Lines, 1987, p. 510). These critics often do not have a good overall picture of home-schooling, but rather base their views on worst-case scenarios, citing poor programs or even child abuse (Lines, 1987).

Some public educators feel that only the public schools can achieve the public's goals for education. Others believe that home-based education is unsound educationally, dismissing

the evidence of above-average academic performance as incomplete (Lines, 1987). In other instances, the uproar stems from school authorities attempting to enforce compulsory school attendance laws (Wade and others, 1984, 1986).

Lines (1987, p. 516) reports that home-schoolers, in turn, at times view public educators as "crass opportunists, interested in their children only for the sake of the federal and state dollars they represent. Or worse, they see public educators as depraved characters seeking to mold other people's children in all the wrong ways."

Schlafly (1984, p. 1) notes that states are using various "goals, tactics, and aggressiveness" in order to govern non-public schools. They are attempting to require state certification of teachers, state prescribed curriculum, and state licensing of non-public schools (Schlafly, 1984). Such measures are violently opposed by home-schoolers who believe it is their constitutional and God-given right to educate their children according to their own beliefs without state interference.

William Mulcrone (1983) in the NSPRA Scanner confirms the apprehension and animosity that exists in the public education system toward the home-schooling issue. He (1983, p. 2) notes that home-schools are a "threat to the peaceful operations of the local school district" and school districts need to "manage" their response to the home-school issue. Mulcrone (1984, p. 1) states that public school educators need to get "proactive to prevent the zealots [home-schoolers] from riding roughshod." Although home education will probably never be a major

issue (in education), Mulcrone (1983, p. 1) states:

> But home-schooling IS going to be an issue that many schools will have to deal with as we near the next decade. And if your school doesn't prepare for it, you will find yourself faced with a problem akin to having a raspberry seed stuck in your wisdom tooth — it won't kill you, but it will be a constant source of irritation.

None of the arguments of the public schools, however, are based on educational studies. The benefits of home instruction are not cited nor are they even recognized, except that of academic achievement (which was dismissed as imcomplete). It appears that public school officials have a lack of knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the home-schooling issue including the benefits derived from home-schooling; thus, hostility results. "The greater burden of building bridges [between the public schools and the home-schoolers]," states Lines (1987, p. 517), "should fall on public officials because they are the professionals in the partnership." And, as professionals, they need to look at the research associated with home-schooling.

Justification of the Problem

In recent years there has been a growing trend for parents to home-school their children as an alternative to traditional education. A review of the literature attests to this growth. Estimates of children who are being home-schooled vary from fifty thousand (Mulcrone, 1983) to two hundred sixty thousand (Lines, 1987), and may be as high as one million (Naisbitt, 1982). These statistics have aroused the curiosity of the writers as to the reasons so many parents have chosen to educate their children at home rather than in public or private schools.

Literature also indicates a number of benefits associated with home-schooling. These benefits include the aspects of social, emotional, academic, and physical development of the child. Home-schooling also provides parents an opportunity to educate their children according to their personal convictions. It is the observation of the writers that in many cases, public school officials have a lack of knowledge of these stated benefits as well as the research related to them. Thus home-schooling is often viewed with apprehension, and at times, animosity (Lines, 1987).

It is the intent of the writers to determine if home-schooling parents agree with the literature concerning the benefits of home-schooling. In addition, the writers would like to determine if there are conflicting attitudes between home-schooling parents and public school superintendents which

may contribute to the apprehension and animosity between the two groups.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is two-fold: to determine the reasons parents choose to home-school their children, and to compare and contrast the attitudes of home-schooling parents with the attitudes of public school superintendents regarding the benefits of home-schooling.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects of this study were parents who home-schooled their children and public school superintendents. All home-schooling parents who responded to the survey were associated with home-school support groups.

Setting

This study was conducted in a five county area in mid-western and southwestern Ohio.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using two instruments: a checklist to determine the reasons parents choose to home-school their children, and a survey using a Likert-type scale to determine the attitudes of home-schooling parents and public school superintendents regarding the benefits of home-schooling. Both instruments were researcher designed based on a review of related literature.

The checklist, consisting of the ten most frequently mentioned reasons parents choose to home-school their children, was distributed to the home-schooling parents. These subjects were asked to rank order the top five reasons from most important (assigned a numerical value of five) to least important (assigned a numerical value of one). The parental responses

for each reason were totaled, and those totals were used to rank the top five reasons parents chose to home-school their children. The highest total score was ranked as number 1; the second highest score was given the rank of number 2; and so forth.

The Likert-type questionnaire consisted of twenty statements concerning the benefits of home-schooling. The subjects, both home-schooling parents and public school superintendents, were asked to respond to the stated benefits by circling one of five responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These responses were then converted to a numerical value (from five for strongly agree to one for strongly disagree). These numerical values were used to tabulate mean scores for each stated benefit of home-schooling. The mean scores were calculated separately for home-schooling parents and public school superintendents.

Both instruments were distributed and returned by mail. In those counties which had a home-schooling support group, the instruments were distributed, collected, and returned by the coordinator of the group.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the checklist accurately measured in order of importance the reasons parents chose to home-school their children. It is also assumed that the Likert-type scale accurately measured the attitudes of both home-schooling parents and public school superintendents towards the benefits

of home-schooling. Finally, it is assumed that all respondents replied honestly.

This research project had several limitations. Since all correspondence with public school superintendents was distributed and returned by mail, the return rate was decreased. The return rate was also limited to only those subjects who voluntarily responded. In addition, all statements on the survey were subject to individual interpretation by the respondent. The findings of this study could not be generalized outside the stated setting; thus, the study was limited by the sampling. Though numerous research was available concerning the benefits of home-schooling, the writers were unable to locate any studies stating the case of public schools concerning these benefits.

Definition of Terms

Home-schooling - an educational alternative in which there is individualized instruction of the child (or children) by the parent in basic living skills as well as in courses of academic study. (Whitehead and Bird, 1984)

Social Contagion - the doubtful habits, manners, and morals; ridicule; rivalry; and so forth which children develop by imitating the attitudes and activities of their peers. (Bronfenbrenner, 1970).

Integrated Maturity Level (IML) - the point at which the developmental variables (affective, psychomotor, perceptual and cognitive) within the child reach an optimum peak of

readiness in maturation and cooperative functioning for out-of-home group learning (typical school) experience. (Moore, 1975)

Intersensory Perception - the integration and cooperation of the senses. (Moore, 1982)

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Results and Discussion of the Data

Reasons for Home-Schooling: The first part of this study was aimed at discovering the reasons parents had for educating their children at home. Checklists were distributed to forty-seven home-schooling parents regarding these reasons. Thirty-three parents responded, resulting in a 70% return rate. Their responses were ranked, indicating the following five reasons these parents thought most important in making their choice to home-school their children. (See Table 1): 1) The desire to incorporate one's religious beliefs into the educational program, 2) A parental desire to be involved with one's child's education, 3) The negative effects of peer pressure in traditional schools, 4) A desire for family life to be home-centered rather than revolving around school activities and schedules, and 5) A belief that children are better socialized by parental example than by other children. These responses reveal an agreement between home-schooling parents and the literature concerning the reasons parents chose to educate their children at home. As indicated in both the literature and the survey, the major reason parents home-school their children is due to religious convictions. Also, both indicate that home-schoolers share the belief that parents should be deeply involved with their child's education. The other three reasons ranked in this study all fall within the major categories of reasons for home-schooling as reported by the experts.

TABLE I

RANK ORDER OF TOP FIVE REASONS PARENTS CHOOSE TO HOME-SCHOOL THEIR CHILDREN *

Reasons for Home-schooling	Rank
Disagreement with the content taught in traditional schools	
The negative effects of peer pressure in traditional schools	3
A dissatisfaction with the emphasis on competition in traditional schools	
A desire for family life to be home-centered rather than revolving around school activities and schedules	4
A parental desire to be involved with your child's education	2
The belief that children are better socialized by parental example than by other children	5
The desire to incorporate one's religious beliefs into the educational program	1
The ability to choose an educational scheme that best meets the principles underlying one's way of life (other than religious)	
The belief that the child was not ready for formal instruction in a traditional school setting	
The inability of traditional schools to provide adequate individualization	
Other	

* See Appendix A to note the weight each of the ten items actually received from the parents who completed the checklist.

Benefits of Home-Schooling: A second part of the study was aimed at determining what people thought the benefits of home-schooling were. To accomplish this aim, surveys were distributed to forty-seven home-schooling parents and thirty-seven public school superintendents to determine their attitudes concerning the benefits of home-schooling. Thirty-five parents responded, resulting in a 74% return rate, and seventeen superintendents responded, resulting in a 46% return rate.

There were twenty stated benefits of home-schooling on the survey. Mean scores were calculated using a Likert-type scale. These scores are shown in Table 2 which lists each benefit individually. The mean score of the home-schooling parents was higher than the mean score of the superintendents for each one of the twenty items on the survey. This shows a difference in attitudes between the two groups as to the benefits a child receives from home-schooling. With the exception of item 16 (on which they were undecided), home-schooling parents were in agreement with each of the benefits of home-schooling as reported in the literature. However, the mean scores of the public school superintendents reveal an agreement with only two of the stated benefits (19,20). They were undecided concerning nine of the benefits (2,3,4,5,6,14,16,17,18) and disagreed with the remaining nine benefits (1,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,15). The only benefits on which home-schooling parents and public school superintendents showed agreement were items 19 and 20, both of which are concerned with teaching according to one's personal convictions.

TABLE 2

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF HOME-SCHOOLING PARENTS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING THE BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOLING *

Benefits of Home-Schooling	$\bar{X}$	
	Home-Schooling Parents	Public School Superintendents
1. A home-schooling environment provides a calm (unhurried) climate in which the child can develop as he or she should.	4.51	2.50
2. Home-schooling allows a child to develop his or her vision, hearing, and sense of touch before formal book-learning begins.	4.23	2.63
3. A child may lack fine motor skills until the age of seven or eight. Since the home atmosphere is more relaxed than the school, it prevents unnecessary stress on the physically immature child.	4.57	2.87
4. Home-schooled children perform academically at or above grade level.	4.49	2.69
5. The academic needs of a child can be met in a home-school environment.	4.80	2.75
6. Home-schools utilize the tutorial method of instruction which provides the best opportunity for children to move at their own pace.	4.71	3.06
7. A child who is home-schooled has a strong sense of self-esteem (self-worth).	4.63	2.38

Benefits of Home-Schooling	$\bar{X}$	
	Home-Schooling Parents	Public School Superintendents
8. Through home-schooling, parents are able to involve their children to a greater extent with the responsibilities of the home which shapes independent, self-directed children.	4.60	2.31
9. Competition, which can be damaging to the self-concept of young children, is eliminated by home-schooling.	3.71	2.27
10. Home-schooling increases self-confidence in children.	4.49	2.31
11. Through home-schooling, parents are able to involve their children in a selected gradual process of mixing with peers which promotes open, cooperative children.	4.24	2.13
12. Home-schooling eliminates the peer pressure found in traditional schools, which may be harmful to a child's social development.	4.23	3.00
13. The development of a child's social skills is better achieved in the home environment through parental example than in traditional schools through peer example.	4.77	2.00
14. A child who is home-schooled is less peer dependent than a child who attends a traditional school.	4.69	3.13

Benefits of Home-Schooling	$\bar{X}$	
	Home-Schooling Parents	Public School Superintendents
15. Children are forced to enter the traditional school before they are ready physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.	4.49	2.33
16. Home-schooling provides young children with the necessary timeframe in which to develop readiness for formal instruction in a traditional school setting.	3.44	2.67
17. Home-schooling in the early years provides a rich background of experience on which to base formal learning.	4.00	2.73
18. Home-schooling provides for the development of family values which is an important part of a child's educational curriculum.	4.89	3.36
19. The explicit teaching of morals more rightfully takes place in the home.	4.86	4.14
20. Home-schooling provides the opportunity for parents to educate their children according to their religious convictions.	4.86	3.86

*Data used to calculate mean scores can be found in Appendix B.

The twenty questions on the survey concerning the benefits of home-schooling which the parents and the superintendents received fell into six categories. These were as follows: questions 1-3 dealt with physical development, questions 4-6 were on the subject of cognitive development, questions 7-10 looked at emotional development, questions 11-14 were concerned with social development, questions 15-17 dealt with integrated maturity level, and questions 18-20 were concerned with personal convictions.

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the two groups when categorizing the benefits of home-schooling into six areas. The greatest difference in attitudes towards the benefits of home-schooling between home-schooling parents and public school superintendents lies in the area of the emotional development of the child. On the other hand, the least difference in attitudes concerning home-schooling as a benefit is shown in the area of parents teaching their children according to their personal convictions.

TABLE 3

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES OF HOME-SCHOOLING PARENTS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING THE CATEGORIZED BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOLING *

CATEGORIZED BENEFITS	$\bar{X}$	
	Home-Schooling Parents	Public School Superintendents
Physical Development	4.44	2.66
Cognitive Development	4.67	2.83
Emotional Development	4.36	2.32
Social Development	4.48	2.57
Integrated Maturity Level	3.99	2.58
Personal Convictions	4.87	3.79

* Data used to calculate mean scores for each category can be found in Appendix B.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons parents choose to home-school their children, and to compare and contrast the attitudes of home-schooling parents with public school superintendents regarding the benefits of home-schooling.

The study used a checklist, and as such it did not ask parents to state in their own words the reasons they chose to home-school their children. The list put words into the parents' mouths; however, this is valid and it can be important if the reasons given are crucial ones. In this case, the reasons on the checklist came from a survey of the literature. As a result, what this study actually showed was congruence between parental attitudes and authors' conclusions — the home-schooling parents agreed with the experts concerning the reasons they chose to educate their children at home.

The same method held true for the benefits of home-schooling that both home-schooling parents and public school superintendents considered. The subjects responded to a Likert-type questionnaire. Here too, the statements came from the literature; therefore, what was surveyed ultimately was the congruence of the respondents' attitudes to that of selected authors. Generally, the home-schooling parents agreed with the experts

concerning the benefits of home-schooling; whereas the public school superintendents did not agree with the experts.

Conclusions

The researchers feel, as with any study, conclusions must be carefully drawn. The writers have researched a number of books by authors who uniformly favor home-schooling. Although these authors build a strong case for home-schooling, their arguments do not show that every child would benefit from home-schooling. It is not the intent of the writers to prove that home-schooling is good or bad; however, based on what appears in the present study the writers conclude that home-schooling is an educational alternative that deserves consideration.

There are three important conclusions the writers have drawn from this study. The first is that the literature on home-schooling is accurate in so far as it represents a portrayal of the beliefs about schools and education. The second is that superintendents seem to disagree with the authors in literature on every point regarding the possible benefits of home-schooling except two (those about teaching according to one's personal convictions). And the third conclusion, which follows from the other two, is that parents and public school superintendents seem to be in conflict with each other.

Parents seem to feel that the authors of the literature on home-schooling accurately state the reasons most parents educate their children at home. Religion is without doubt the most important reason. The least important reasons appear to

be concern for competition in public schools and the belief the child was not ready for formal instruction. This is both an expected and an unexpected finding. It is expected because religion is ranked as the primary reason for teaching one's child at home. But it is unexpected because several experts, as a review of the literature shows, contend that a child's readiness for formal schooling and the harsh consequences of competition are important reasons parents give for home-schooling. The parents in this study did not rank these as major reasons.

The public school superintendents in this study not only tended to disagree with the benefits stated by the experts in the literature, but also exhibited extreme animosity toward the issue of home-schooling. This was revealed by the unsolicited, negative, written comments on several of the surveys which were returned by superintendents.

As previously stated, the third conclusion is that parents and public school officials are in conflict with each other about home-schooling. This might be an expected conclusion — after all, their interests in many cases are opposite. But, there is an unexpected and possibly fruitful area for agreement between these two groups. Public school superintendents see moral development and religious preferences as benefits arising from educating children at home. And, these benefits are the most important reasons the parents in this study chose to home-school their children. This agreement about moral and religious training could allow public school officials and home-schooling

parents to meet and consider this aspect as one acceptable reason for home-schooling. It would at least be a beginning in resolving the conflict.

The other reasons frequently cited in the literature for home-schooling — such as excessive competition or the negative effects of peer pressure in public schools — may be less of a reason to have children taught at home and more of a reason to have individually guided instruction or some other curriculum modifications for individual differences within the public schools. The parents might be more willing to support public education if school officials were more flexible in structuring their program to accomodate the specific needs cited by home-schooling parents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are made in hope that home-schooling will be better understood as an alternative form of education.

1) More extensive research needs to be done to give a clearer overall picture of the benefits of home-schooling.

2) More study is needed to identify any negative effects home-schooling might have on children (especially long range). An understanding of these could give parents insight on improving their educational program.

3) Public schools should take into account the reasons parents home-school their children, and the benefits derived from this alternative form of education. They could profit by

being flexible in ways which would foster improved physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children.

4) Both home-schooling parents and public school officials should have the following goal: to develop open communication and cooperative relationships between home-schools and public schools.

APPENDIX A

Copy of Checklist
and Parent Responses

Reasons for Home-Schooling

The following checklist, consisting of the ten most frequently mentioned reasons parents choose to home-school their children, has been compiled based on a review of the literature concerning home-schooling.

Directions: Please rank order five reasons which you felt were important in your decision to home-school your child (children). Rank these reasons from most important (assigned a numerical value of five) to least important (assigned a numerical value of one). In order to compile the data accurately, it is necessary that five reasons be ranked.

____ A. Disagreement with the content taught in traditional schools

____ B. The negative effects of peer pressure in traditional schools.

____ C. A dissatisfaction with the emphasis on competition in traditional schools

____ D. A desire for family life to be home-centered rather than revolving around school activities and schedules

____ E. A parental desire to be involved with your children's education

____ F. The belief that children are better socialized by parental example than by other children

____ G. The desire to incorporate one's religious beliefs into the educational program

____ H. The ability to choose an educational scheme that best meets the principles underlying one's way of life (other than religious)

____ I. The belief that the child was not ready for formal instruction in a traditional school setting

____ J. The inability of traditional schools to provide adequate individualization

____ K. Other (please specify) _____

PARENT RESPONSES TO REASONS FOR HOME-SCHOOLING CHECKLIST

	Reasons for Home-Schooling										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
		3	1	4			5	2			
		3		5	4	1				2	
	2	3			5		4	1			
	4			1		2	5	3			
P	2	1		5		3	4				
A	3	4		2	5	1					
	3			2	4	1	5				
R		3		5		2	4			1	
E		2		1	3		4			5	
	1	4		2		5	3				
N		2		1	4	3	5				
T	4			3		1	5			2	
	4			3	2	1	5				
		4		5	3		1		2		
		1			3	2	5			4	
	4	2		1		3	5				
R		4		3	2	1	5				
E	2	4		3	1		5				
	4	3			1		5			2	
S		3		4		1	5		2		
P		4		1	2	3	5				
		1	2	4	3	5					
O	4	3		1			2				5
N				2	4	3	5			1	
		4			3	2	5	1			
S	1	3			5	4	2				
E	1			3	2		4				5
	1			4		3	5			2	
S	2	3	1			4	5				
	2	4			5		3			1	
	2	1			3	4	5				
	4				3	2	5			1	
		2		1	5	3	4				
Totals	50	71	4	66	72	60	130	7	4	21	10
RANK	6	3	10.5	4	2	5	1	9	10.5	7	8

APPENDIX B

Copy of Questionnaire
Responses of Home-Schooling Parents
Responses of Public School Superintendents

Benefits of Home-Schooling

The following statements summarize the most frequently mentioned benefits a child may receive if he or she is educated at home.

Directions: Please indicate to what extent each of the following statements reflect your beliefs about the benefits of such home-schooling by circling the appropriate response: (SA) Strongly Agree, (A) Agree, (U) Undecided, (D) Disagree, (SD) Strongly Disagree.

1. A home-schooling environment provides a calm (unhurried) climate in which the child can develop as he or she should.

   SA A U D SD

2. Home-schooling allows a child to develop his or her vision, hearing, and sense of touch before formal book-learning begins.

   SA A U D SD

3. A child may lack fine motor skills until the age of seven or eight. Since the home atmosphere is more relaxed than the school, it prevents unnecessary stress on the physically immature child.

   SA A U D SD

4. Home-schooled children perform academically at or above grade level.

   SA A U D SD

5. The academic needs of a child can be met in a home-school environment.

   SA A U D SD

6. Home-schools utilize the tutorial method of instruction which provides the best opportunity for children to move at their own pace.

   SA A U D SD

7. A child who is home-schooled has a strong sense of self-esteem (self-worth).

   SA A U D SD

8. Through home-schooling, parents are able to involve their children to a greater extent with the responsibilities of the home which shapes independent, self-directed children.

SA A U D SD

9. Competition, which can be damaging to the self-concept of young children, is eliminated by home-schooling.

SA A U D SD

10. Home-schooling increases self-confidence in children.

SA A U D SD

11. Through home-schooling, parents are able to involve their children in a selected gradual process of mixing with peers which promotes open, cooperative children.

SA A U D SD

12. Home-schooling eliminates the peer pressure found in traditional schools, which may be harmful to a child's social development.

SA A U D SD

13. The development of a child's social skills is better achieved in the home environment through parental example than in traditional schools through peer example.

SA A U D SD

14. A child who is home-schooled is less peer dependent than a child who attends a traditional school.

SA A U D SD

15. Children are forced to enter the traditional school before they are ready physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially.

SA A U D SD

16. Home-schooling provides young children with the necessary timeframe in which to develop readiness for formal instruction in a traditional school setting.

SA A U D SD

17. Home-schooling in the early years provides a rich background of experience on which to base formal learning.

SA A U D SD

18. Home-schooling provides for the development of family values which is an important part of a child's educational curriculum.

SA A U D SD

19. The explicit teaching of morals more rightfully takes place in the home.

SA A U D SD

20. Home-schooling provides the opportunity for parents to educate their children according to their religious convictions.

SA A U D SD

PARENT RESPONSES TO BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOLING QUESTIONNAIRE

Question Number	Responses SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score	$\bar{X}$	Category $\bar{X}$
1.	19	15	1	0	0	158	4.51	Physical 4.44
2.	13	18	3	1	0	148	4.23	
3.	21	13	1	0	0	160	4.57	
4.	20	13	1	1	0	157	4.49	Cognitive 4.67
5.	28	7	0	0	0	168	4.80	
6.	26	8	1	0	0	165	4.71	
7.	24	9	2	0	0	162	4.63	Emotional 4.36
8.	22	12	1	0	0	161	4.60	
9.	8	15	6	6	0	130	3.71	
10.	18	16	1	0	0	157	4.49	
11.	12	18	4	0	0	144	4.24	Social 4.48
12.	15	14	5	1	0	148	4.23	
13.	27	8	0	0	0	167	4.77	
14.	25	9	1	0	0	164	4.69	
15.	23	8	2	2	0	157	4.49	IML 3.99
16.	4	16	5	4	3	110	3.44	
17.	13	15	2	1	3	136	4.00	
18.	31	4	0	0	0	171	4.89	Personal Convict-ions 4.87
19	31	3	1	0	0	170	4.86	
20.	30	5	0	0	0	170	4.86	

PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSES TO BENEFITS OF HOME-SCHOOLING QUESTIONNAIRE

Question Number	Responses SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Score	$\bar{X}$	Category $\bar{X}$
1.	0	4	1	10	1	40	2.50	Physical 2.66
2.	0	3	4	9	0	42	2.63	
3.	0	6	1	8	0	43	2.87	
4.	0	5	3	6	2	43	2.69	Cognitive 2.83
5.	0	7	1	5	3	44	2.75	
6.	1	7	0	8	0	49	3.06	
7.	0	1	5	9	1	38	2.38	
8.	0	1	3	12	0	37	2.31	Emotional
9.	0	2	2	9	2	34	2.27	2.32
10.	1	1	2	10	2	37	2.31	
11.	0	0	4	9	2	32	2.13	
12.	0	8	0	6	1	45	3.00	Social
13.	0	0	4	7	4	30	2.00	2.57
14.	1	6	3	4	1	47	3.13	
15.	0	5	0	5	5	35	2.33	IML 2.58
16.	0	3	4	8	0	40	2.67	
17.	1	2	5	6	1	41	2.73	
18.	0	10	0	3	1	47	3.36	Personal Convict-ions
19.	5	7	1	1	0	58	4.14	
20.	2	9	2	1	0	54	3.86	3.79

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